Stygian by BlizzardRose

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Summary:

SEQUEL TO 'TRAGICO HISTORIA':

In the months since the Upside Down has returned to haunt Will Byers and Hawkins, Indiana things have been stranger. But after a shocking death in the summer of 1984, a deeper plot comes to light. One with a puppet master who's all too familiar to Hawkins residents. His goal? Destroy the town he sees responsible for hurting the two daughters he had: one a victim of the town's past and the other seemingly forever scarred by it. Should he succeed: Hawkins will cease to exist. Should he fail? He. Doesn't. Fail.

1. Graduations

Author's Note:

- For Ab0019.

  Here we go, kids!

  This I hope will be a worthy sequel to Tragico Historia, which if you're new I'd obviously suggest reading first to get a feel for the series. Tags will be updated as I think of them but without further adieu, enjoy and leave feedback if you'd be so kind!

  Stygian: adjective; relating to the Styx River.
  literary;
  very dark

  Also, Ab0019: this is for you Amber. Your support gives me life. Seriously.

Stygian

Chapter 1- Graduations
May 22, 1984
Eleven

I got to watch my friends graduate the middle school, but one was missing. And that was Will. He was still in the hospital in Hawkins not far from the middle school. Will was dying, Papa said and the doctors who were as not as smart as Papa agreed. The now high schoolers were recessed to their families and friends now, so I went over to see my friends all in caps and gowns. I was in a gown too but a champagne colored one with floppy sleeves that Papa said was from 1931. My little heels clicked as I walked. The lights made the yellow jasper clips through my hair glint.

“Yay Mike,” I said coming over to my best friend, he dressed nicely in a shirt and nice pants under the blue gown. I kissed him on the cheek. Lucas and Dustin were dressed like that too and Max was in a

peach-colored dress, a little darker than mine. I could tell she hated it, Max was more for jeans. “Celebrate guys!”

“Yeah we should,” Mike said, “I just wish Will was here.” Mrs. Byers had come to see this and she’d sat by me during the ceremony looking proud but sad because Will was not here. Hopper had stayed with him at the hospital since Will was pretty much living there he was that sick. Dying, Papa said.

“Arcade this weekend?” Dustin asked, “After we go see Will?”

“Pizza too,” I suggested. With my friends, we usually had pizza that I liked but it was nowhere near the intricate Swiss food Papa had made for me. I was now 89 pounds heavy, Opa and Papa just said my body was functioning fast and I’d lose weight fast after gaining it for a little. Both of them were concerned still, but Oma said it was what it was. I think she used to nurse kids like me.

“Pudding after,” Dustin suggested.

Mike Wheeler

After Mom had insisted on a million pictures we all made our way to our respective cars. Mom was carrying Holly and Nancy was talking to Jonathan with Mrs. Byers. I walked with my friends to my family’s Mercedes when the 1932 old Roadster pulled up. El’s face lit up like it would with me but different. Brenner came to her like a servant and I stepped back. “Did you have fun, liebling?” he asked her, the German making my blood freeze.

“Oh yes, Papa. So happy for my friends,” she said taking his hand, “Will see you guys later. Maybe tomorrow.” Her smile so sweet that I wished I could bottle it and keep it, her eyes shining. But I also knew that El and I were from different worlds, marked clearly now more than ever.

“Man, let’s all ask if we can hang out at your place,” Lucas said.

“D&D tournament?” Dustin asked, “Loser buys the party’s next arcade night?”

As the wind blew, not a hair on El's head came out of place. Since the car had no seatbelts she sat with me, her hands below mine on the wheel. "Burd come by?" El asked me. Burd was a lawyer who was preparing the case against the surviving members of Owens' practice. Given, they were few as most had committed suicide (or that was what Jim Hopper and the media knew) when in reality I had killed a good margin of them on nights where my skittish little electress rode along asleep but not wanting to be alone.

Freund said her triggers would be almost impossible to be rid of so we had put her on Xanax, a rather recent innovation in treatment for people like El. It was easy to give to her, just a little pill she'd take with water. It'd leave her a little groggy but after major panic attacks, it was better than the hysteria she'd just gone through. "Yes, he came. Brought you an Eggo extravaganza isn't it called?" The child loved her Eggos, always would. But Father kept her well stocked, noting they might increase her weight.

"He's nice," she said, "And he'll take bad men down. Remember the news stories that are coming out?' Hawkins, Indiana was no longer a silent haven now we were under national attention. The former lab's and now the leaks about Owens' dubious methods and his practice had set us as the hub for the call for bioethics to be enforced. "Bioethics," El said thinking about the word Burd used.

"It means the ethics of research," I said as we turned to leave sleepy Hawkins that had shut down for the night. The Byers woman kept insisting I be at the hospital every morning but I can assure you Byers' condition rarely changed these days. The monster came out more often than not and the boy's stats were so low I was indeed surprised that he was still alive. But I'd be lying if I said I hadn't bet Father on his death date.

The grand house with Greek columns was illuminated by the chandelier that hung in the foyer, lighting the grand stairs and the marble floors. I escorted my sweet El inside, her hand warm in mine as she returned to her true home. Mother met us at the door, a plate of chicken schnitzel for her beloved granddaughter. "Let's get you fed, lovely."

2. The Death

Notes for the Chapter:

> Nothing like starting your 4th of July off with a PLOT TWIST!
>
> To all those celebrating, have a safe and happy 4th (it's my favorite holiday!) Also, why not drop by a kudos or comment?

Chapter 2- The Death
May 23, 1984
Joyce Byers

“Your son,” Brenner’s voice held the cold distance and superiority complex, “Will not survive the night.” No I’m sorry Mrs. Byers like a normal human being. But Eleven somehow made up for it, her willingness to be the comfort. My shame in selling her out last year consuming as she walked over and offered her hand. Desperately needing it, I clung to her.

“You’re wrong,” I didn’t know why I even had decided to speak, but then again Will had almost died several times so maybe this wasn’t different. The bright lights of the room almost blinding me I stared Brenner down but eventually couldn’t look at him so I looked at little Eleven, dressed in a silver dress that looked vintage with her hair straightened.

“I’d advise you listen to me,” Brenner was again so cold, but not as cold as I bet he wished he could be, Eleven keeping him in check. “His stats are too low. 70 percent oxygen, his heart rate dropping into the 40s,” he looked at sweet Eleven and said in chilling German, “Vierzig, liebling, und siebzig.” El nodded.

“No good,” she looked at me sadly.

“Maybe you can find the monster and ask him to give Will back,” I knew it was a long shot but I had to try. El shook her head sadly, pointing to it.

“Upside Down hurt too much, mind. Wound festering."

Chief Jim Hopper

I wished I could say something to calm the sobbing Joyce but just holding onto her was all I could think to do. Eleven was holding her hand as the monitors showing Will’s stats went nuts, beeping in a panicked way. Ross, Brenner’s lap dog as it were, looked at Brenner asking what to do. The flashbacks of Sara let me speak for him:

“ARE YOU NOT GOING TO TRY AND SAVE THE KID?” I shouted, if they didn’t I knew we could sue for malpractice and wrongful death and the thought almost brought a sense of justice to me. The monitors rang in my ears like the ghost of hospitals past haunting me. Brenner motioned to Ross as if he couldn’t stand to get his own hands dirty. Pissed me off.

I watched Ross pound on Will 30 times, nothing. Two breaths, nothing. It was almost like I was watching myself and Joyce try to revive him after finding him in that place. My heart felt like it was drowning in my blood, sinking so low and being consumed. Outside the sky darkened.

“PLEASE,” Joyce cried, “WILL COME BACK!”

He didn’t.

Max Mayfield

I was at the arcade playing Dig Dug with the guys as a way to celebrate summer. We’d come from visiting Will this morning like we usually did on the weekends. Our parents let us have the day since we should be given more freedom like high schoolers. I heard the door to the arcade open and Mike’s mom, Mrs. Wheeler, stood in the door not looking good at all,

We each stopped our games, Mike leading us over to her. “What’s wrong?” Mike asked her, sensing the same thing I did. Parents never

came into the arcade, they just honked annoyed when we had to finish a level. Outside, it had started to rain as if confirming things were bad. Mrs. Wheeler looked like she'd been crying.

If someone's dead I swear to God, I thought. She opened her mouth, "Will died a few moments ago. One of the doctors at the hospital called for Joyce to tell me and your father." I looked at the boys, each of them looking like the blood had completely left them but they didn't quite understand at the same time. Although I hadn't known Will as well as they had I still felt like the words cut my skin, a papercut that hurt like hell. "Let's go dears," Mrs. Wheeler led us from the arcade into the rain and as it fell on my head I didn't even realize I'd forgotten to lift my hood.

Eleven

I stood, hugging Mrs. Byers, it was all I could do. I had never known anyone who died like Will just did. His machines had been turned off and he lay so still. I bet if I touched him he'd still be warm like somebody living like me. I felt Opa put his hand on my shoulder, "Come, maus. It is time for Eggos, no?" Maybe Mrs. Byers wanted to be alone. I stood up, my white hospital gown from 1937 pretty around me.

"YOU KILLED MY BOY BRENNER," Mrs. Byers screamed. I squeezed Opa's hand, hoping Mrs. Byers would be good. Papa smiled calmly like her words didn't phase him in the slightest. I let him pick me up, my bare feet winding around him. His heart beat to say he was very much alive, unlike Will. Opa stood by us, rubbing my back. I was kind of sad Will was gone: I didn't know him as well as Mike but he was still a friend.

"No, Joyce, actually I did not," Papa said softly but so deadly. I would have been afraid had I been Mrs. Byers, "However there's someone else still alive I could very well deal with who I'm letting live by sheer mercy for a right act committed wrongly. So if I were you, I'd avoid pointing your finger, ja?" The German word I knew made me smile but Mrs. Byers shivered. Why were so many afraid of Germans? The War people were older now and the language pretty.

“Come, liebling,” Papa led Opa out as he carried me down the hall, “It’s all right.”

Notes for the Chapter:

So, is Will really dead?! Thoughts?

Also, out of El's elaborate wardrobe thus far I have to say I love that Brenner got her an authentic 1930s hospital gown.

3. We're in Mourning

Notes for the Chapter:

> See? Told you guys this one was going to be darker. But fear not, that's not the last we'll see of Will. His storyline is actually super interesting as we'll see...
>
> Anyway, hope you enjoy!

Chapter 3- We're in Mourning
May 23, 1984
Dustin Henderson

I was trying to hold it together, be a man.

But sitting in Mike's basement the empty chair at the table that was Will's taunted us, reminded us. Mrs. Wheeler had been so good to let us huddle here bringing pizza as we all tried to hold back tears. Max actually held Lucas' hand, the most affection I'd seen her display ever. And she respected our mourning of an original party member. We were broken down now.

The pizza was getting cold as Mrs. Wheeler opened the basement door and let Eleven come down. She was dressed in what looked almost like a hospital gown but not one Will had worn and her white shoes made noise on the steps. She came down and put her arms around Mike, not in a gross way but in a way to show solidarity. "Sorry," she said, "He happy now I bet." Mike broke down then.

Which I guess, set off a chain reaction for us to do so too.

Eleven

I had never known Mike to cry, but all the boys did since Will was one of them. Me and Max offered comfort best we could, she went and got sodas for them and I levitated tissues when needed, which was lots. The rain continued outside like the sky was crying over Will too like I imagined it had rained when Sister Maggie died, crying for

the loss of the innocent.

I wasn't sure how long had passed but didn't want to know. I had a blanket shared with me and Mike, hoping that might make him feel better. I wondered why the world would take people from us like Will or Maggie or eventually it would take Opa and Oma away too, Freund and Papa. It was so unfair, that much I knew. I wanted to call Freund, say something sad happened and I needed his gentleness to help me even though I was not worse off here. As I sat in the pillow fort that used to be home I wished to be in Switzerland.

Eventually, Mike's mama came downstairs and she told me and Max it was time to go. "Why we have go?" I asked Max, much more apt at being a normal girl than me like she was my living sister. I knew sometimes I kissed Mike but I didn't ever do more, and I loved giving hugs. She just shrugged.

"See, parents are worried that since like me and Lucas are dating and you and Mike are that we might do adult stuff. It's weird."

"No adult things," I said looking at Mike, "Party sad." I gave him another comforting hug before following Max upstairs. We said goodbye and thank you to Mike's mama before I followed Max out, she getting on her board and hugging me right as the old Roadster pulled up making me smile. Papa got out to get me, his hand in mine a comfort.

Martin Brenner

Driving to the house El slept, exhausted by the day's event. Carrying her in the house she woke and said, "Is Will gone because I didn't help him?" Her brown eyes looked concerned. Jim Hopper should be glad my moral compass was in my arms or else he would have died tonight too and Joyce Byers would pay her dues for suggesting sending El into the Dark Place she still woke up in a sweat over.

"Nein," I said to her softly as Mother and Father came to meet us, "Du kannst nichts dafür. Your compassion for others is something I wish I had more of. You are like your Oma," I kissed her cheek.

Father had a plate of Eggo extravaganza for her so I brought her to the bar area for her to eat. Apparently, Eggo had some recipes to do with their waffles and Mother had bought the book for the house.

“Where’s Will now?” El asked. Obviously, she knew him dead but her curiosity remained for the corpse which was probably at the morgue. “What Will’s mama and Hopper do now?”

“Well, there’ll be a funeral,” Mother said, “That’s when you bury the dead and remember their life.” As she ate El pondered the concept.

“Will you all come to my funeral whenever it is?” she asked, an innocent question but one so contemplative for a young woman. “Even as ghosties if you have to? And Freund and his family. Mike and party. I’d want 1930s theme.” She smiled up at me and it almost made me sick to think that one day El would be dead as I would. Someone like her deserved eternal life.

4. Every Occasion I'll Be Ready

Notes for the Chapter:

> Like I said, this one is WAY sadder (at least I think so) so I hope the fluff really balances out the sadness. But be prepared, things get weird but then again what's Hawkins without weirdness?
>
> A good song for this chapter is Band of Horses' "The Funeral"
>
> As always, enjoy!

Chapter 4- Every Occasion I'll Be Ready
May 26, 1984
Eleven

I wore black to Will's funeral since we all were supposed to. My dress went to my knees and was really simple with my black ballet flats. I stood with the party, holding Mike's hand as there were words spoken that were supposed to remember Will. Max was holding Lucas' hand and we each held Dustin's. Parents stood behind us, Papa's hands resting on my shoulder. Even though Will and I weren't close I was glad to have Papa's hands hold me up because if they didn't the party might fall apart.

Hopper was holding Mrs. Byers and Nancy was holding onto Jonathan, who seemed so nice but now shattered. Schnapp's words didn't sound pretty to me, they might have been if he'd spoken them in German. After the service people came up to talk to us, one of them I recognized was the science teacher Mr. Clarke who I'd met at the assembly last year. He smiled in recognition of me.

"How are you all holding up?" he asked. None of the boys really wanted to talk so Max did.

"It's been hard on us. Thanks for your concern, Mr. Clarke," she said with a smile.

“Yes. Thank you much,” I agreed. “Will was a good friend to so many of us,” I squeezed Mike’s hand I held.

Martin Brenner

After the funeral for Byers, they had refreshments. I got El a bottle of water and fruit punch for her to drink as we walked around socializing (or rather, she did). These people should be honored to talk to the girl who sympathized with a town who knew Byers more than she ever had, her empathy running so deep. “Ready to go home to be happy,” she said.

“Here,” I gave her my hand which she squeezed, “We’ll go home and put you in something happier, ja?” She smiled at the German and I let her say goodbye to her friends before leading her out to the car sitting her on my lap so my arm could function as a seatbelt. The day was a gloomy one not raining but still, the cloud coverage matched the occasion. “There’s someone who came for you.”

Leading her inside she saw Freund standing in the foyer and she lit up. “Oh Freund,” she ran to him and he picked her up spinning her. Burd had asked to meet the Swissman in his research to bring about the medical malpractice suit on Owens’ surviving practice members, the main man himself surely convicted in absentia. “Knew you’d come one day.”

“Yes, I’m here. I heard your friend Will died a few days ago,” he said so softly, “I’m so sorry Miss Eleven,” he set her on her feet and patted her head, “That must be hard for you and your friends.”

“Mike so sad, Freund,” she said, “I hugged him lots and Max hugged Lucas. Wish someone could hug Dustin. Was there when Will died, hugged Mrs. Byers, Will’s mama.” That was one of the images that made me back off on Hopper’s life, for now, El holding Joyce Byers as the woman gave into grief and Hopper’s gratitude to her for it. The little girl in the 1930s hospital dress and pearls in her hair stood above them above us all. “I think hugs help the sad ones.”

Siegfried Brenner

“I hope to be happy now,” Eleven said to us as we bathed her, she standing in front of Martin like he was Paris and Zeus commanded him to pick the fairest goddess but still after beginning to adjust to normalcy the societal taught shame of her body did not register with her. “Now that Will’s gone things are so sad. Hopefully not anymore.”

“Maus, things will be much happier tomorrow,” I said to her, “Tomorrow we can get ice cream in town and lunch,” with it being summer that seemed a popular thing to do with children like Eleven.

“Go back to Switzerland soon, but happy Freund is here,” Martin drained the water and picked the 89 pound girl up, his handling of her so delicate, her heartbeat must have been tangible to him a count going on in his head like mine. She might be forever slightly underweight but as long as we kept her organs functioning properly she’d be just fine. Her arms clung around Martin like he was an extension of her own being. “I love you, Papa.”

“Du bist mein Ein und Alles,” Martin told her. The light of his existence, and our family’s, she had become in such a short time. The soft silver nightdress he put her in matched the flourite studs in her ears and woven into her braid. “Papa loves you.”

“As does your Opa,” I said, she took both of our hands as we led her through the open door to head downstairs for more dessert.

Eleven

Going to bed that night I rested my head on Papa’s shoulder. He let me have a coke before bed which was a treat. “Hurt can?” I asked him as I sipped on it after taking the medicine Freund put me on. At the lab sometimes I would hurt cans, bend them with powers and things. Papa shook his head no.

“Just enjoy,” he said, “Coke is a nice treat, no? You deserve it after being such a leader at Byers’ funeral.” I wondered what leader was so I asked. “It means you set examples and people look up to you, El.”

“I look up to you, Papa.” It was true, I did.

5. If I Go, There'll Be Trouble

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi loves!
>
> So here's the next chapter! This one is loads of fun because we get an interesting connection I even didn't see coming until I wrote it, but it makes for a great subplot if you will. Enjoy!
>
> Hooray for "Should I Stay or Should I Go" references!

Chapter 5- If I Go, There'll Be Trouble
May 30, 1984
Maggie Brenner, in her 'Heaven'

It was nice now not to be alone. Will Byers was a super sweet kid and I was happy to share my happy place. Will had been here about a week and we'd become super fast friends, both of us curious about how Hawkins will move forward. "Wasn't that a really shitty thing for the monster to do?" Will asked me, "You know, kill me like that."

"Oh definitely," I said, "But I can say having found it a few times myself it's pretty scary and it wants a new overlord for the Upside Down. I think it killed you by mistake because now he's got nobody." I sat twirling a lily.

"So is he going to leave Hawkins alone?" I could tell he hoped I'd say yes. But having found the monster on the day of Will's death I knew the next move. I shook my head.

"Not exactly. I thought it might want my sister, but it doesn't care about her. For some reason, it wants your family, maybe because you escaped it once and then died."

"It wants revenge." I knew the concept well, I was a Brenner after all.

"Yeah."

Mike Wheeler

A week later and it didn't seem real, still.

Mom brought food to the Byers every night but I couldn't bring myself to accompany her over there. We'd retired Will's chair at the table downstairs and made a kind of memorial. Tonight El was over for dinner. She had on a light peach pink dress with sleeves you could see her arms through that looked like from an older time and shoes that clicked when she walked. I wondered why she had begun to dress like Nancy might but she was beautiful with her curls and I was always so mesmerized even that she chose to like me.

Mom made a potato casserole. Holly had told El the gems in her hair were pretty. "It's so good to see you here, Jane honey," Mom said, "It's nice to see things start to move forward."

"Thank you for cooking," El said, "I like home cooked food. In Switzerland, Inge makes good food. You'd love her, and you'd love my Oma too. She was a nurse in War," she liked to talk about her family, but never in a way that put them above us in terms of money.

"How are you all holding up at your house?" Mom asked, "I know Will was your friend too."

"We fine. Poor Mrs. Byers," El said, "Hope Hopper is sweet to her. She needs sweet now. Sweet to Jonathan," she said to Nancy.

After dinner, El and I went to the basement. We loved to sit in the pillow fort and talk, occasionally I'd kiss her if she was okay with it. Sometimes I'd blush like an idiot and she'd smile and say, "You red Mike!" I didn't want to kiss her too much, that'd be weird like Nancy did. But I did love stealing a kiss or two. "We should call Lucas and Max come over," she said, "Or go to my house."

Eleven

Mike came to my house, riding me there on his bike like we used to. It was almost night time, sun setting pretty. Ray was at the door to take my coat and park Mike's bike for him so nice. "So pretty out," I said as Ray opened the grand doors for us. In the foyer, it was lit up

and the piano was being played by Laurence who sometimes came to play for us. I immediately recognized the song, it was ‘Come on Eileen’!

“Did you know I was coming?” I asked Laurence, who just smiled. I took Mike’s hand and began to dance with him, “I dance like this.” He laughed, it’d been a while since he had. I heard German being spoken in the next room so I guessed Papa, Opa, and Freund must be talking. I wondered if Burd was here and if he knew German. I wanted to show him Mike, so I led him over.

I saw Freund first and he came over and kissed my cheeks, “You look like a 1930s electress, Miss Eleven.,” he said. “Is this your Mike you like to talk about?”

“He is in high school now,” I said, ‘President of AV Club,” I told Freund, “Burd here? He speaks German?”

“Burd is here, but he doesn’t know German,” Freund said, “He brought you some pretty flowers to be sweet to you.” I loved flowers.

“Mike sweet to me. Hugs me lots, and kisses me, Freund,” I didn’t know why Mike blushed. Kissing was sweet. “Says he’s boyfriend, so I asked Max what that is. She says it means he loves me differently than Papa, you, or Opa.”

Notes for the Chapter:

> Aww, Mileven are so innocent and cute I love them!
>
> Also, did y'all expect Will to end up where Maggie is? Let me know!

6. Eye For an Eye

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hey guys!
>
> So sorry about this delay, life just got in the way! Anyway, hope you guys like these two chapters I'm posting!

Chapter 6- Eye for an Eye
May 31, 1984
Max Mayfield

Hawkins recently got a Dunkin' Donuts so Lucas and I went to get out of the house. I liked coffee (I'd started drinking it last year) and Lucas wasn't really into it yet but he liked donuts. I rode on my board to meet him there, ordering a latte on ice which was my favorite. "Hey stranger," I said as he walked in.

"Hey. So I invited Dustin if that's cool," he said, "Figured he'd want to get out too, you know?" I sipped my latte.

"Yeah absolutely. So I heard there's a new girl maybe coming to school in August called Sabrina and I want Dustin to meet her," This was totally not like me at all to be a matchmaker but Dustin I could tell almost felt left out in the party as the odd man out.

"Are you feeling okay? Like who the hell are you?" Lucas asked. I smacked him.

"Shut up, Sinclair."

Martin Brenner

"So, why Mike kiss me lots?" El asked me as she was eating an Eggo that morning, "Strange, no? Says he's boyfriend and I say okay. What does that mean? Lucas is Max's boyfriend she says. Mike so sweet."

“It means your Michael is in love with you, liebling,” I told her but she did not understand. “He loves you, but different from how I do or Oma does. With Michael's love, it means one day you can get married to him. Just like Oma and Opa. They got married in 1933.”

“And they still love?”

“Very much, liebling.”

“You marry Maggie’s mama?” she asked, “Bet she was beautiful like Sister Maggie. Was her name Maggie too?”

“No, liebling, it was Mabel. Mabel was like your mama, but we had Maggie but they took her away. Then they took Mabel,” It had been years since I had thought about Mabel Daube, her face almost lost to me over the years. While I wasn’t sure I loved her or if I ever had I loved what she’d given me.

“So sorry Papa. You and me are all, and now Mike says he’s boyfriend and you say he loves me. Good thing? Do I love him back?”

“I think you do, liebling. He’s your best friend he is so you probably love him,” she smiled and took a sip of her tea.

“Although I love you the most Papa. Always. Also, Will is with Sister Maggie now saw him. I hope he loves her. Can ghosties love? I love Sister Maggie but she a ghostie.”

“I bet Byers appreciates her like he should have you,” I told her, “Everyone should appreciate you.”

Will Byers, in his ‘Heaven’

“You’ve got to be kidding.”

I looked at Maggie after what she’d just told me and wishing it didn’t make sense but the sad thing was that it made all the sense in the world. That nights with Nancy in the woods Jonathan had pulled Nancy from the Upside Down. But even that didn’t make sense as to why the monster wanted Jonathan. ‘What did you figure out?”

Maggie asked, her blue eyes looking at me.

“No,” I said, “The monster wants hosts it had taken from it. Jonathan was never in the Upside Down. But Nancy, Mike’s sister who was with Jonathan that night, got sucked in. It wants her as revenge for losing me. It’ll infect her.”

“Yeah, wasn’t that like two years ago?” Maggie asked,.

“It’s a virus. Surely some viruses can be dormant for years wouldn’t you think so?” I asked. I had to warn Mike somehow. “The Wheelers don’t deserve what we went through.”

“So warn them,” Maggie suggested.

“How?”

“That’s for you to figure out, Zombie Boy,” she patted me on the shoulder, “I know you’ve done it before so just do what you did then.”

Siegfried Brenner

“Your mother won’t like what I’m about to endorse,” I told Martin as he was putting rubies in Eleven’s hair that was curled loosely for the day. She looked like a young Jacqueline Onassis, but far richer and more loved, “But technically only one of Owens’ employees alive for this trial whenever it happens.”

“God, I’ve wanted to hunt them all down,” Martin’s thirst for revenge had not been quenched in these months. Nothing would truly satisfy my son until all those who had harmed his girls had died by his hand. “I have the names of everyone involved under him, looked them up in the phone book.”

“So we start eliminating them. I highly doubt a single witness for the defense here will be sufficient to stand a chance in this case. And judges favor children like our maus. Imagine you’re on that bench and told a child was subjected to shock treatments. Shame Owens will be convicted in absentia. I would love to see him stand as they

sentence him to die." I thought back to the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial, those men had wept like children as their fate had been decided.

I looked at my poor maus, still, such a skittish little one who could not bear a closed door and had to be told every bath her senses wouldn't be taken away. "You can cover up deaths, no?"

"I've been doing it far too long."

Notes for the Chapter:

> What did y'all think about learning Maggie's mama's name?

7. Bring (Her) Home

Notes for the Chapter:

> And here's a chapter where we get more of the Will dynamic that I actually am loving as well as some insight into the night at the middle school at the end of season 1 and the start of this series' canon divergence. Enjoy!

Chapter 7- Bring (Her) Home
June 2, 1984
Joyce Byers

“Mom.”

I jolted awake, knowing Will’s voice. It was early in the morning and Hopper woke up with me. “What is it?” he asked, “It’s 3:19 in the morning.”

“I heard him. Will. I swear I did.”

Eleven

Today was more IV day. Papa cleaned the spot on my arm the needle went and held my other hand. Opa stroked my hair and Freund let me have waffles to distract. Oma was doing my hair pretty in a ponytail like Max would sometimes wear. “What is Nuremberg?” I asked Papa, “Doctors Trial? Opa said it yesterday.”

“It was after the War,” he explained as the needle went in, “I was a bit younger than you when they started. Some bad men did unethical things which means they hurt people, El. Your Opa testified against them, told the world the violated the oath to help.”

“Hippocrates,” I said. I’d heard that name a few times and Papa said that people like him revered Hippocrates and they swore an oath to him to be good. I wondered if Hippocrates knew when people broke the promise. Friends don’t break promises. Ever. Papa smiled and

kissed my forehead.

“Yes, liebling. You’re so smart. Come here,” he picked me up, my feet away from the syringe like normal. I loved when he held me, it made me feel less broken and that I was worth gold to him and my family. I loved my family.

“You help me, Papa. Want pretty flowers.”

“What color would you want, liebling?” He asked, so attentive. I liked the ones Burd got me so more of those. “For my hair.”

Martin Brenner
Flashback, November 11, 1983

“Take back home, Papa?” El said from her place in my arms at the middle school. I didn’t pay much attention to those boys with her that were shouting at me to let her go. Surrounded by the corpses of Frazier and other guards Eleven had run to me when I had found her, unexpectedly but God my heart unlocked.

“A proper home,” I said rising to my feet with the thin girl in my arms, the teenagers still shouting at me as I walked away. Eleven’s heart rate was weak after using her abilities so strenuously to kill Frazier and the others her breathing slow. I would let the others deal with this Thing. “Eleven, I’m so sorry,” I said, “We need to make you well, you’re quite sick.” I needed to get her to the actual hospital so I could treat her, begin the healing process.

I expected her to try and get away, but she just clung to me tighter her breathing improving. “I knew you were good, Papa.” As I walked out with her into the night she shivered from the cool air.

One of the guards looked at me, “You’ve recovered her.” After which I shot him in the head. Getting Eleven into the lab van with me didn’t cause any attention as I thought it might. Reversing from the parking lot I sped towards the small nearby hospital, Eleven’s eyes on the sleepy town.

Getting there, I rushed her in and demanded a room for her, the best

room this small place had on the top floor. They tried to put her in a traditional hospital gown but they yielded to me after a threat on their lives. She let me put her in a soft white hospital gown, her brown eyes trusting and knowing I meant what I'd said. "Papa?"

"It's alright, Eleven. Go to sleep now."

Chief Jim Hopper
Present day

"I know I heard him, Hop!" Joyce sobbed as we sat having coffee in the kitchen, "He called to me. What if his body was a fake like what happened last time." She didn't even touch the coffee I'd put in a mug for her. I never was much of a praying kind of guy, but I did pray that Jonathan wasn't here. He didn't need this since Will's death devastated him. "We could sue Brenner, Hop."

"Joyce, that man would kill us both before the papers could be drawn up. He thinks we hurt Eleven, genuinely he believes it. I don't want to put you or Jonathan at risk." And I didn't because I knew that Brenner had ways of doing things I couldn't imagine. Things even I couldn't stop. "Maybe we need to get out of town for a bit, the three of us. Go someplace."

"Where would we go?"

"A beach? I don't know. But being here is not good for anybody in this house," I didn't want to upset her by calling her out but I knew this time it was different. Will was as dead as Sara. And it was a bitch to accept, but if anyone could get her through it was me.

Ulla Brenner

Since she wanted flowers, that's what Siggy gave her. Pink ones he got for her, tucking the blossoms in her hair so delicately like she was an Archduchess and he a poor servant. Martin's attentions devoted to the child wanting her every wish to be granted even as she ate her lunch. I looked at the IV dripping into her, a new bag would soon be

needed. Siggy knew that she took fluids well but never retained them well.

“Switzerland,” she said, “Oase. Miss it. Freund, I miss Issie and Alessio. So sweet,” the good psychologist smiled, “We go back soon Papa?” Her big chocolate orbs turned on my son like he walked on water.

“It’d be good to go, liebling. Your friends need to adjust to their new reality so it might be wise to give them time, no?” If I knew my son’s devotion, we’d be on the plane to Zurich tonight. In an hour perhaps. Her wish, his command.

“Oh, Papa we must.”

8. Darkness of the Brenner Line

Notes for the Chapter:

> Sorry this is so late coming! I've been so busy these last few days with my birthday and summer winding down and life things! Anyway here are two chapters to make up for it I hope! Also, get ready to take some shots in this chapter (teehee)!
>
> Enjoy!

Chapter 8- Darkness of the Brenner Line
June 2, 1984
Eleven

Papa had me sit on Opa's lap, my grandfather's arms so caring around me, I knew he'd help me. German whispered in my ear sweet words of comfort. Freund sat by me, his hand on my shoulder gently supporting me, Oma stroking my hair. Papa sat before me in case I would fall forward as the anesthesia would come over me., which he said I might "Are we going to Switzerland?"

"Ja, maus," Opa said softly, "Wir gehen nach Hause."

"Liebling," he was so soft and sweet with words, "I'm just going to put my hands on your chin like this," he did so but holding the mask gently, "Sehr gut. Du kannst jetzt schlafen gehen, liebling." I was wanting to fall either forwards or backward but I knew it did not matter which way I fell because I would be safe either way. I fell asleep with German words in my head.

Martin Brenner

I didn't dare leave the sleeping El, her health so fragile, as Father and I drove to the building that housed Owens' former practice. Mother and Freund were preparing for the trip but I knew I couldn't leave Hawkins with this massacre undone. I was likely to burn in hell for it,

but I'd already been burning there for some time.

"They'll begin to pay for their sins," Father said as Ray parked the Hawkins Lab van that we had driven in to accommodate El hooked up to an IV and now monitors. Father and I navigated the bed inside, one of Owens' workers I recognized opened the door. "Dr. Brenner?" Father's wartime experiences and skill hadn't left him because the man could barely get out a word before a shot was placed in his head. El was too deeply asleep to hear it.

I found myself wondering how many of them were here that she knew. She'd given me pictures from newspaper clippings I had brought to her over the months in my search to do worse to these men. Father had the pictures in his pocket and tore one of them, "That was Heaton there," he stepped over the corpse like it wasn't even lying there. El's stats perfect. I could almost imagine Dvorjak playing as we made our way, Father's war issued pistol and my syringe quite the Wagnerian picture.

"Who lives out of all them to be sentenced by the courts?" I asked as he flipped through the pictures.

"Mclaughlin," he decided, "Owens' most trusted underling he is. So we spare him, they try him, they convict him."

I looked at the sweet sleeping El, her head turned towards me her hand outstretched as if it knew mine wasn't there to tell her there was nothing to be afraid of. Kissing her forehead I knew we had to get to Switzerland soon. Hawkins was her hell.

Mike Wheeler

I had stayed over at Lucas' house that night because he had suggested we change up the usual hanging at my house since our other regular place was off limits for obvious reasons. Leaving Lucas and Dustin after breakfast I got on my bike to ride over to the mansion in the heart of Hawkins.

Getting there I wiped the slight sweat from my forehead, June

mornings were getting too hot if you asked me. Through the gates I saw the house looked pretty empty but I buzzed the gate anyway, knowing one of Brenner's cronies had to be there. "Who is it?" Carroll.

"Mike. Is El here?"

"Left for Switzerland today, kid. Don't know when they'll be back." Shit.

Luca Freund

We were in the air to Zurich by one in the afternoon. Ulla Brenner and I had no difficulty putting together where both of the Dr. Brenner's of the family had gone. "What's done to them is done Perle," Brenner's father told his wife, "They hurt a Brenner so they pay, no?" She nodded, knowing her husband must have passed the particular trait to his son. Martin Brenner was exactly like his father, but darker in personality.

"Push more Propofol," Brenner said to his father, looking at sweet Miss Eleven's monitors, asleep as she could be. The takeoff process hadn't stirred her in the slightest, the anesthetics made her sleep carelessly and the fluids hydrating her. Watching Siegfried Brenner take such care of his granddaughter made me feel the shame of the American Medical Association that produced such evil as Owens to darken the whole profession that produced such minds as the Brenners. Miss Eleven's chest rose and fell steadily and we all clung to each monitor beep like our life depended on hers, which technically it was.

We landed early in the morning, touching down at the airport in the city that was still lit up with the last of the nightlife. As we unloaded little Miss Eleven, who was gently brought out of the drugs. "Do you know where we are, maus?" Siegfried Brenner asked, his hand holding hers.

"Oh," her face lit up like the city in front of her, "Am I dreaming?"

“Nein, liebling. Das ist eich.”

Notes for the Chapter:

I just love El's love for Siegfried. It's so sweet!

9. Pawns < Kings

Notes for the Chapter:

> Oh hey here we meet Isotta Freund and her son Alessio! Also, yay for being back in Zurich! Enjoy!

Chapter 9- Pawns < Kings
June 2, 1983
Chief Jim Hopper

I went into the station after getting a call from Flo about a possible mass suicide like Benny Hammond's last November. But as soon as she'd said the words I felt the same unsettling feeling I'd had with the circumstances of Benny's death. Leaving Joyce reluctantly I got into my truck, my radio in hand.

"Who reported this Flo?" I asked her.

"Someone called Paul Mclaughlin. He works at that little psychiatric clinic in town, you know that used to be Dr. Owens' before he died a few months back." I remembered investigating Owens' death; his sobbing widow insisting she had not seen any warning signs but the manner in which he died confirmed her story. There was no way a man that desperate to die would slit his throat like that, so precise. Almost surgical.

God damn it.

He was going to kill all of Hawkins' residents who he believed to have hurt her if he had to.

Eleven

Papa released me from all my machines so he could pick me up, my arms and legs feeling like noodles that wrapped around him but he supported me so well. When I could keep my eyes open they gravitated to the lights still on in my true home, Hawkins my temporary place. "We're home, liebling," Papa said.

“I’m so happy,” I said as we got into the car that was waiting on us. I sat on Papa’s lap facing backward so I could sleep but still see the city if I wanted. As we drove I listened to the precision of the German words between Papa and Opa mesmerized by the brilliance of my family. They could speak German, save lives, and I’d bet right now with me so weak Papa’s heart beat for mine.

“I assume by now that Byers’ chief has been called about what happened at the clinic,” Opa said. I wondered what that meant but the mention of Owens definitely chilled me even though he was long dead. I still dreamed he wanted me in a tank like the other bad men. “Mclaughlin had to have contacted him.”

“After witnessing a massacre like that, Mclaughlin is possibly too traumatized and frightened to do anything to upset me,” as I listened it made sense Papa had killed again. Did I forgive him? With all my soul. “But let him tell that oaf Hopper. Hopper knows what I will do to him. While he brought her to me, he did betray a Brenner didn’t he?”

I’d heard once the unofficial Brenner family motto was famille uber alles and now I understood what that was. If you hurt a Brenner, your penalty was death.

No exceptions.

Martin Brenner

The Swiss dawn gave into the morning as we reached Oase. Freund summoned his family while Mother and Father visited with Inge who had arrived shortly after us. I took care of the still groggy El, bathing her with sponges since she could not yet stand. “Bad men dead?” she asked.

“Some of them, the ones who worked for Owens,” I told her. She reached out for my hand that was free of the sponge. I could see her chest rise and fall, her little heart and lungs already improving as the disease of Hawkins was a far away threat now. “I forgive you. Not them.”

“And you don’t have to,” I said, “You won. They lost.” She smiled, the sunlight of morning illuminating her face that was full of joy even though the mental wounds were still open. “Now you are home, where your family can take care of you.”

“Am I too old to need Papa?” She looked at the still open door of the bathroom.

“Never, Jane Eleven.”

Chief Jim Hopper

“You should have arrested him,” Joyce said from on the phone in my office. I had filed the report on the deaths at Owens’ and spoken to Paul Mclaughlin who could barely form his words. “He killed Will, Hop. He was negligent and we both know it.” I did know it but what Joyce didn’t understand was that if she said too much she was risking her life. “We should’ve sued like Terry Ives.”

“And lost like her,” I reminded her, “Joyce you read that article. We both saw what he did to Terry Ives. The last thing I want is for that to happen to you, too. It’s not above him to do the same to you. Then we’d be nowhere.”

“Hop, we can’t let him win.”

“He won the second Eleven made the choice at the middle school to go back to him,” I admitted and I hated the way it sounded, “Since then we’ve been pawns on the Brenner board.”

“Hop, there has to be something we can do.”

“I wish there was.”

Luca Freund

Issie came to the grand estate, a pasta brought with her and our son in one of those baby backpacks. “Little figlia,” she loved referring to

Miss Eleven as her daughter since we had not one of our own, “Is she well?”

“She’s still quite sick, amora, it will take some time to get her right,” I said leading her inside, “But your presence and Alessio’s are blessings to her.” At his name, my small son smiled. “Miss Eleven is certainly well fed with all the pasta you make. I led her to the kitchen where Inge took the pasta to refrigerate it. Siegfried and Ulla smiled at Issie having met her the last time they were in the country.

“Your little man has grown,” Ulla said, “Very sweet. How old is he?”

“Five months now.”

I heard footsteps on the grand stairs. Brenner carried little Miss Eleven, her body around him like he was her monitors like on the plane trusting him and his ability to kill anyone to protect her. She was awake now, dressed in one of her many old looking hospital dresses. “Miss Eleven,” I said, “You must remember Issie and Alessio?”

10. Reopen Old Wounds

Notes for the Chapter:

> Back for more, my kids!
>
> Anyway, life's starting to get crazy so forgive my slow updating! As always feedback rocks so why not leave some?
>
> Also, pay attention to the last bit of El's section in this chapter as there's something in the details she doesn't fully understand, but you might get (and understand why Brenner was infuriated by it).

Chapter 10- Reopen Old Wounds
June 5, 1984
Mike Wheeler

Nancy was never sick, so when Mom told me that I was struck that something might be weird. It wasn't like Nancy and I were closer or anything, it was just a known fact that she was the girl who never missed anything; school, a sleepover or whatever girls do, dates with Jonathan. It never happened.

"Lucas? Come in, over," I said into my super com sitting in the pillow fort, "Something's up. Again. Over."

"What are you talking about, over? Does Dustin know, over?"

"No, over. My mom said Nancy was sick and with the whole Will thing still being recent I'm almost tempted to be freaked out, over."

"I'm sure it's just like a strep virus or something, over."

Maggie Brenner, in her 'Heaven'

"So you're telling me that this thing can be dormant in a person for years?" God love Will Byers, he was a sweet kid but like good Lord I

was not speaking German was I? I looked at him, my blue eyes on his brown. His white suit reflected by the light. I couldn't be frustrated for long though because those kinds of emotions weren't really Heaven-like but still, they almost made me feel alive again.

"Theoretically," I said, "Yeah, so if Nancy went looking for you with your brother and she got sucked into the Upside Down the Demogorgon could've gotten a chance to infect her."

"But she was there for minutes. I was there for days."

"Yeah, that's something weird but I don't think it's impossible. I found Mike, and he's concerned if that tells you anything." That had to have had him put two and two together because I think that was what he found strangest. "You can visit him too if you want to see. I'll teach you. It's super easy."

"Thanks."

Eleven

Waking in Switzerland was my favorite especially all warm and with Papa's arm around me like a fortress. He always let me sleep a long time, said I needed it. I could see the Alps and the sun made them sparkle this morning as the light breeze the open widows gave kissed my skin and hair. "How does it feel to be home, liebling? I know Hawkins is not good for you," Papa just knew things. Although Hawkins had Mike and friends I knew it was almost like reliving my childhood when I was there. "Switzerland is a place of healing."

"With no shocks, only waffles," I said. Sometimes I felt so stupid for waking up in the night after dreaming of shocks crying but Papa was so sweet offering kisses to head and hugs. That had been tonight but he'd sing me back to sweet sleep. I looked up at him, knowing he'd protect me from shocks. He'd killed Owens.

"You see, meine liebling?" he said into my hair, "Hawkins is not a good place for you. Your trauma festers there."

"Festers," I thought about it and I knew he was right. It was only in

Hawkins that I was scared of the little monitor that showed how I lived and the stickers. Here, no. I knew that not for head and no shocks. But Mike was in Hawkins but maybe he could come to Oase so I'd never go to Hawkins. "Poison."

"Ja," Papa said. Thinking about Hawkins made me think about that night at the middle school where I knew I wanted a good life, a happy one. Papa had taken me to the hospital and they asked if they could test me for being a mama. At the time I knew what mamas were but I didn't know you could test to be one. "Sie ist nur ein kind," he'd said and then thrown the man against the wall. Now knowing German a bit I understood why that bothered him so much.

I couldn't be a mama, I was just a young girl.

Joyce Byers

I was not expecting a call from Karen Wheeler today so when Jonathan answered the phone in the living room he sounded just as surprised. "Nancy is where? What? Oh, my God." I wondered what could possibly be wrong with Nancy, she was never sick or anything. But then my thoughts turned to last year and I almost wanted to vomit. Jonathan hung up the phone and he looked the same way.

This was not happening again. Not this soon. We couldn't do this again. Karen couldn't do it and God forbid Ted Wheeler know any of this. "Mom, Nancy's sick," Jonathan said, "Like Will was." His name still opened those wounds deeper.

"Call Hop," I said, at a loss for any other action. I wouldn't let this thing take Nancy like it did Will. One was enough. I was putting my foot down here.

I would not let this thing control my life.

11. Whole Lot of History

Notes for the Chapter:

> Y'all I know how late this is and I'm so sorry!
>
> But life has been insane on my end as of late but here's the next chapter of the story! I promise I haven't forgotten about it!
>
> In this chapter, we get lots of good stuff so definitely leave feedback if you can!

Chapter 11- Whole Lot of History
June 5, 1984
Chief Jim Hopper

“Kinda strange how these things keep happening, huh Chief?” Powell said as he looked over the reports from the clinic, “Owens dies and now most of his colleagues are dead? Sounds like some real Benny Hammond shit,” I wanted to slap that remark out of his mouth but I just sat at my desk, “Not to mention the younger Byers kid.”

“Just bring Paul Mclaughlin to me,” I grumbled to shut him up, “I have a few more questions.” Of course, I felt I knew the answers already but I needed to get Powell the hell out of my office. He nodded and left and all I could think about was the number of Hawkins locals were on Brenner’s list. Me. Joyce. Possibly the kids. Good God. I could visualize the pawns being knocked off the board by the knights, protecting the queen. We were the pawns, all certain our time would come.

The only hope we had was Eleven if she could forgive us. My desk phone ringing brought me out of my musings as my list was scribbled on a scrap of paper, “Hopper.”

“Hop, the thing is back.”

Mike Wheeler

Being here made me want to yack so bad. The memories were still fresh and I almost expected El to be rolled by with machines. But she wasn't here, so why then did I catch the scent of lemons that her hair smelled like as I walked through the building? It was like her imprint was here haunting me from half a world away while the scars of the last days of Will's life were closer almost infiltrating the place worse.

Jonathan was here not long after me and Mom arrived. "NANCY!" he screamed but she didn't hear him. Some of the people tried to hold us back as they took Nancy who stared blankly like she had no idea where she was. I stood bewildered with Jonathan. "Shit," he swore, "It'll get her too."

"No, it won't," I said sounding more confident than I felt for his sake I guess, "We'll come up with a plan. Why don't you call Steve, man? He deserves to know too I think." Jonathan shrugged but eventually nodded. I needed to get away so I could use my super com to call the party.

This was not about to happen again.

Eleven

Freund turned on the music for me from my mixtape of old songs I loved. Issie made me a traditional Italian sausage and egg bake that was very yummy. She had the little Alessio in her arms and he smiled at me with his big eyes as I ate. I was allowed off my IVs today so I could get more natural sustenance. "So small, figlia," Issie said as I ate.

"I am 89 pounds," I said, "Can't gain much weight. Metabolism high. Papa and Opa worry about immune system, whatever that is." I often heard them in German talk about making sure I didn't get sick especially when winter came. Opa said it was a side effect of being underweight which made me think I was bad, but Papa said I wasn't. They also worried about how my organs functioned. "I'm a mess."

"No, liebling," Papa said squeezing my shoulder, "It's just that with what you've been through your body functions have never been

where they should be," he kissed the side of my head sweet, "Opa and I are sometimes worried your organs might not be functioning as they should that's all but things are getting better every day. In Hawkins though we are even more concerned, so we must stay here."

"And Hawkins has bad men."

"They're dying out, liebling. Soon, they will be all gone, just memories no one wants to remember."

Martin Brenner
Flashback, November 11, 1983

After they had brought Eleven some warm soup I sat with her as she looked around. Her body was weak but still she managed to shake out of fear or something else I didn't know. "You're safe, Eleven, I promise you," I said gently and that seemed to calm her a little. Her eyes darted towards the door, "They won't touch you."

"Like lab?"

"No. You're free of the lab," I told her, speaking to her softly getting her to take another bite, "Things will soon be set right." I could see her breaths and God I worried about her lung function. She was such a tiny thing that took more effort to breathe when she was so drained from the full extent of her powers, just like her heart function. "Papa promises you."

"Kill them?"

"They won't be alive much longer," I said knowing most of them would come at my beck and call, not wanting to risk their jobs. In fact, a few of them might have already noticed my absence and I would be here, waiting. Waiting to call their number, watch the sand run from the hourglass of life that had spared me after all these years the evil of these men too complacent to question deeds. Eleven's little body still shook and I found myself counting the breaths the extraordinary child took. Eins, zwei, drei, vier… "It's all right, Eleven. Do you trust Papa?"

“Always.”

Eleven
Present day

Opa took a little bit of my blood and I sat still to be good for him. He was so sweet to me, distracting me so much with talk I didn’t think to look at the needle. “You must be so happy to be back home, maus. Now we can make every day like the 1930s for you. Did you know your Oma loved to dance like you do when she was younger? I met your Oma after treating her as a resident in 1929?”

“You love her right then?” I asked, intrigued. I’d never heard how they met and I wanted to know about when they were younger.

“Oh, maus she was the most beautiful girl I’d ever seen, her hair like yours very curly. I asked her to come out with me months later and we married when she was 20 and I was 23. Then your Papa was born.”

“Martin Otto,” I said.

“Yes. I am Siegfried Alexander and your Oma is Ulla Brunhilde,” he said as I saw him wipe a bit of blood from my arm.

“Sweet story, Opa,” I said, “Mike met me when I was lost in woods.”

Author's Note:

Send in some feedback!